

PRESS RELEASE

Consultation on EU package travel regulations

As part of the European Commission's review of legislation related to consumers, the Commission launched a consultation process on Directive 90/314/EEC which governs travel, holidays and tours sold as packages. By listing what it considers to be the main regulatory problems in the field, the Commission is trying to gather the views of the industry and consumers alike, prior to tabling any legislative proposals.

Forum Malta fl-Ewropa has today 20th September organised a consultation session to encourage local participation in this regard.

Mr. Charles Grech, from the Malta Tourism Authority, presented an overview of the Directive and the issues being mentioned in the Commission's working document. Participants, representing various sectors, have in turn underlined their respective positions. Emphasis was laid on the issue of creating a level playing-field for consumers, tourist operators and airlines. Definitions also cause their fair share of concerns – what do moral damages constitute of and should these be considered for compensation, how does one differentiate between businessman and consumer, is medical tourism covered by the package travel directive? Other issues such as prices, guarantees, the harmonisation of hotel standards and insolvency funds were mentioned.

The travel sector is evolving rapidly, with new developments such as the internet and low-cost carriers as well as tourist expectations leaving their mark. Regulations in turn need to reflect this changing environment, if they are to protect consumers well. The trend for tourists to create their own packages (the term *dynamic* is being used) means that these are not always covered by protection afforded through the Directive, even though they may be more or less identical travel packages to those organised by tourist agencies.

The questions posed by the Commission are intended to generate reactions. The focus, it must be stressed, is not the imposition of obligations on operators but to strengthen consumer confidence – a situation which should be beneficial to both.

More information on the Commission working document may be obtained from *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* through forumconsult@gov.mt or telephone number 2590 9101. Presentations made are available on www.forummalta.gov.mt.

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STQARRIJA GĦALL-ISTAMPA

Konsultazzjoni fuq regoli tal-UE dwar vjaġġar organizzat

Bħala parti mir-reviżjoni tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea fuq il-ligijiet relatati mal-konsumatur, il-Kummissjoni nediet proċess ta' konsultazzjoni fuq id-Direttiva 90/314/KEE li tirregola l-ivjaġġar, il-vaganzi u *tours* mibjugħa bħala pakkett organizzat. Il-Kummissjoni, anki billi qed tniżżel il-problemi regolatorji li l-iktar jispikkaw f'dan il-qasam, qed tipprova tiġbor l-opinjoni ta' l-industrija kif ukoll il-konsumatur qabel ma tipproponi xi ligijiet.

Illum, 20 ta' Settembru, *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa*, organizza sessjoni konsultattiva biex jinkoraġixxi parteċipazzjoni lokali f'dan ir-rigward.

Is-Sur Charles Grech, mill-Awtorita` Maltija għat-Turizmu, ta deskrizzjoni generika tad-Direttiva u l-kwistjonijiet msemmija fid-dokument tal-Kummissjoni. Il-partecipanti, li kienu qed jirrapreżentaw diversi setturi, ukoll għamlu l-interventi rispettivi tagħhom. Saret enfazi fuq il-kwistjoni li kulhadd għandu jiġi ttrattat b'mod ġust, sew jekk konsumatur, operatur turistiku jew linja ta' l-ajru. Id-definizzjonijiet użati f'din id-Direttiva wkoll jaf ikunu problematiċi – x'inhuma danni morali u għandhomx jiġu kkunsidrati għal kumpens, kif issir distinzjoni bejn wiehed li qed jivvjaġġa fuq xogħol u konsumatur iehor, kif ukoll jekk it-turizmu mediku jaqgħax taħt id-direttiva ta' vjaġġar organizzat. Ġew imsemmija wkoll kwistjonijiet oħra bħal prezzijiet, garanziji, l-

armonizzazzjoni ta' l-istess standard għall-lukandi u fondi f'każ ta' falliment ta' operatur turistiku.

Is-settur ta' l-ivjaġġar qiegħed jevolvi b'mod mgħaġġel, bi żviluppi bħall-internet u linji ta' l-ajru bi prezzijiet baxxi jhallu l-marka tagħhom. Ir-regolamenti għalhekk iridu jirriflettu dan il-kuntest biex il-konsumatur ikun protett sew. It-tendenza li turisti jorganizzaw il-pakkett tagħhom (it-terminu *dinamiku* qed jintuża f'dan il-kuntest) tfisser li dawn mhux dejjem qed jigu mharsa permezz ta' din id-Direttiva, għalkemm il-pakkett ta' vjaġġar organizzat minnhom jista' jkun simili għal dak li jkun qed jigi organizzat minn operatur turistiku.

Il-mistoqsijiet li qed tagħmel il-Kummissjoni huma maħsuba li jqajmu reazzjonijiet. Wieħed irid jenfasizza li l-għan m'huwiex l-impożizzjoni ta' obligazzjonijiet fuq l-operaturi imma li tiġi msahħa l-kunfidenza tal-konsumatur – sitwazzjoni li għandha tkun ta' benefiċċju għat-tnejn.

Iktar informazzjoni dwar id-dokument tal-Kummissjoni tista' tingabar mill-*Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* permezz ta' forumconsult@gov.mt jew fuq in-numru tat-telefon 2590 9101. Il-preżentazzjonijiet jistgħu jinkisbu minn: www.forummalta.gov.mt.

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